

By STUART EARP: Wycombe Wanderers 3, Walthamstow Avenue 1

A VINTAGE performance by striker Tony Horseman maintained Wycombe Wanderers' revival on Saturday against Walthamstow Avenue. It was "Bodger" who bagged two of the goals and had a hand in the third as the Blues recorded their second successive Rothmans Isthmian League victory.

In his 14th season with Wycombe — his only club — Horseman is banging in the goals as regularly as ever. So far this term he has 34 goals and heads the league charts as the most successful scorer in both divisions.

On Saturday he was irreplaceable. Playing as if he had just won the premium bonds that morning, the veteran produced one of his best games of the season and looked by far the most dangerous forward on the field. Leaping above the Walthamstow defence, he supplied many superb touches for his front runners — and then went on to score twice himself.

Overall, this could only be described as a fair performance by Wycombe. They did enough to earn the three points but seldom produced the flowing football that so often destroys defences. For a few seconds Avenue might have snatched a draw at 2-1 but a goal 60 seconds from time sealed the verdict.

The other outstanding Wycombe contribution came from centre half Dave Bullock. Winning 99 per cent of anything in the air, he totally dominated the visitors' attack. Indeed, only from dead ball situations did Wanderers look in any trouble at the back.

Ian Rundle, still a long way from match fitness, came into the side at full back for Paul Birdseye while Tony Price took over the number 12 shirt from Dylan Evans, on duty for Wales against Ireland. These were the only changes from the side that beat Hayes 3-0 on Monday.

Spectators had only just got into their seats when Wycombe took a shock lead after just 120 seconds. Steve Perrin created the chance by flicking the ball on to Horseman. With a yard's space, Tony wasted no time in hooking the ball over goalkeeper John Payne from ten yards. Payne got his fingertips to it but was too far off his line and only pushed the ball further into the net.

There followed a minor hold up while referee Bark changed the match ball, which was

apparently too soft. Whatever the weight of the ball, it was still difficult to control on the hard ground and therefore constructive football was limited. Early on, however, the Blues strung a series of raids together that gave Walthamstow no end of trouble. But whenever the ball was played in the air, they generally came out worse off.

Horseman went close with a half volley after Payne had only half-punched clear and against a static defence, the home side began to exploit the large gaps. For a side that had lost only once in the last ten outings, Avenue looked awfully susceptible in defence.

But they had their moments in attack. Mick Taylor had John Maskell in trouble with an awkward shot and then Bob Wiles fired just wide from long range. Any attempts of breaking through the home defence,

however, were quickly dealt with by Bullock, while Mead tidied up well with a string of pass backs to his goalkeeper.

On the half hour, Wanderers went further ahead. Terry Reardon, who had won his first England cap against Scotland the night before, took a throw-in on the top wing. The ball bounced high for Perrin to glance on at the near post. Horseman darted in, failed to make contact but put off full back John Knapman to such an extent that he could only steer the ball into his own net with Payne badly positioned.

Two minutes later Pritchard, who also played for England on Friday, produced an all-too-rare glimpse of his skills when he slipped between two defenders, wrong-footed a third and then drove powerfully over the crossbar from the edge of the box.

Avenue came back well with

Terry Howard going close in the 34th minute, firing just wide after being put through by Jackson. But they seldom looked like pulling back the leeway in the first period.

Five minutes after the interval, however, former international forward Howard brought out the best save of the match from Maskell. Terry Smith's shot was going well wide when it struck Grant and diverted into Howard's path. Driving home a shot low and hard, Howard saw the goalkeeper stick out a hand and palm the ball away for a corner.

With Reardon, Pritchard and Perrin out of touch, Wycombe struggled to mount any real pressure on Walthamstow. Perrin had trouble keeping upright while the simple things that he normally does so well, were just not going right for Pritchard.

But there were some occasional flashes of brilliance. A fine run by Perrin, when he pushed the ball cheekily through a defender's legs, gave Holfield a clear route to goal, but Mick's shot was well parried by Payne. At the other end, Avenue's excellent skipper Brian Wilson, lofted a header which scraped the crossbar from Howard's corner. Too often Wilson was able to get in a free chance with his head inside the six yard box.

Ian Rundle went off with Price coming on in the 82nd minute. Ian receiving a good round of deserved applause for a competent game in trying conditions. Reardon switched to full back and Pritchard to midfield. It was Pritchard who almost made it 3-0 in the 85th minute when he nearly deflected the ball past Payne from Horseman's left foot cross. Seconds later Price dallied too

long when well placed after good work by Perrin.

Then, with 87 minutes gone, the veteran Brian Jackson, pulled a goal back out of the blue. For once Wycombe were caught square as Taylor placed the ball through for Jackson to shoot accurately past Maskell.

Walthamstow were never allowed to even think of pulling back again. With 60 seconds left, "that man" Horseman struck again. Price played a superb first time ball into his path, leaving Tony unmarked. Taking the ball on the volley, he sent the ball dipping over Payne to make it 3-1 in the best possible style.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; I. Rundle (sub A. Price 82 mins); K. Mead, D. Bullock, R. Grant; P. Wood, T. Reardon, M. Holfield; S. Perrin, A. Horseman, L. Pritchard.

WALTHAMSTOW: J. Payne; J. Knapman, T. Smith, B. Wilson, M. Jones; B. Jackson, S. Tries, R. Wiles (sub L. Reed 58 mins); A. Carrington, M. Taylor, T. Howard.

Referee: J. Barker (Brentwood).
Half time: 2-0. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Horseman 2 (2, 89), Knapman 99 (30). Walthamstow — Jackson (87).



Wycombe Wanderers second goal against Walthamstow on Saturday. John Knapman, hidden by Tony Horseman (9), sends the ball over his own goalkeeper, John Payne, with Terry Smith (right) helpless to stop its progress.